

# EXHIBIT A.543



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Special Dispatch No. 226

## The Highest Ranking Palestinian Authority Cleric; In Praise of Martyrdom Operations

On May 25, 2001, one week before the bombing of the discotheque in Tel-Aviv, the **PA Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine** (appointed by Arafat), **Sheikh 'Ikrimah Sabri**, the highest-ranking cleric in the PA, delivered the Friday Sermon in the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Sheik Sabri spoke in praise of martyrdom ['suicide'] operations, citing early Islamic history. He also criticized the Mufti of Saudi Arabia who declared such operations as religiously illegitimate, and demanded the release from American jails the four Arabs convicted in the World Trade Center bombing in New York. Following are excerpts from the sermon[1]:

"Oh Muslims, let me begin my sermon with a quote from the words of the Prophet's companion Abdullah Ibn Rawwaha in a speech he delivered to his army on the eve of the Battle of Mu'tah." He said: "Oh People, I swear by Allah, that the thing you hate [meaning death] is what you are going out to seek today: The Shahada [Martyrdom]."

"We are not fighting with a large army, nor with force. We are fighting only with this religion [Islam] with which we have been blessed by Allah. So attack and you will gain one of two blessings: either victory or martyrdom. In the eighth-century, the Muslim army consisted of only 3,000 soldiers, while the large Roman army exceeded 100,000. The commanders of the Muslim armies discussed [the plans for] the battle and decided to go into battle and clash with the masses of Roman soldiers despite the fact that they [the Muslims] had a small number of people and a small amount of weapons."

"Oh Muslims, 'the first commander of the Muslim army sacrificed his life in the Battle of Mu'tah. It was the Prophet's companion, Zayd Ibn Al-Haritha. So the command was taken over by the next commander, the companion Ja'far Ibn Abu Taleb who came down off his horse and launched an attack into multitudes of Romans until his right hand palm was cut off. He passed the banner to his left hand but that one too was severed. He still continued to hold the banner of the flag between the two stumps where his hands had been, until he was struck by a Roman soldier."

"It was a hard hit that cut his body in two. In his body there were 50 stabbings, none of which entered in his back because he did not retreat. He faced the enemy and was amongst them. That is the nature of believers who do not retreat at the time of the assault. And I ask : Is Ja'far's breaking into the ranks of the enemy regarded as suicide? No, God forbid. No! It is martyrdom for the sake of Allah. The Prophet named him Ja'far, the Flyer, because Allah granted him two wings when he reached paradise, in place of his two hands cut off in the battle. He persisted in the battle and in attacking the enemies ranks until he died as a martyr."

"We tell this to those who think it is an act of suicide [referring to the Mufti of Saudi Arabia][2]: "Be careful with your religious rulings."

"Oh Muslims. Oh believers, the Prophet's companion, Abdullah Ibn Rawwaha, was the army's third commander. He took the flag and fought until he was martyred. The Muslim soldiers were perplexed because they had no commanders left, since the three commanders who were appointed by the Prophet, were already martyred. The soldiers were about to retreat, but then, the Prophet's companion, 'Uqbah Ibn Abi 'Aamer, said to them: "Oh people, a man is better off being killed with his face to the front than while withdrawing'. Yes, Oh Muslims. The soldiers realized their situation and agreed on appointing as Emir, the noble and heroic, Khaled Ibn Al-Walid, who managed, by his wisdom, his ability, and military skills, to save the army from total destruction. This was the first battle that was commanded by Khaled Ibn Al-Walid since he embraced Islam. When he took the flag that day, he fought fiercely. On the second day, he devised a brilliant plan for withdrawal, sustaining only minimal casualties."

"Oh Muslims, when the Prophet sent the army to Mu'tah, he gave them the following instruction: 'conquer in the name of Allah, fight the enemies of Allah and your enemies in Al-Sham [Syria]. You will find innocent people there. Do not harm them. Do not kill a woman. Do not kill a child. Do not uproot a tree, and do not destroy a house.' This is our great Islamic religion. It encourages good ethics and high morale in days of peace, as well as in days of war."

"On the other hand, our enemies destroy houses, kill children, destroy wells, disconnect water, and uproot trees. They prevent pregnant women from reaching hospitals and they are forced to give birth by the side of the road. They use warplanes against defenseless citizens. Yes, they are occupiers and not owners of any sovereignty..."

"They think that they scare our people. We tell them: in as much as you love life -- the Muslim loves death and martyrdom. There is a great difference between he who loves the hereafter and he who loves this world. The Muslim loves death and [strives for] martyrdom. He does not fear the oppression of the arrogant or the weapons of the blood-letters. The blessed and sacred soil of Palestine has vomited all the invaders and all the colonialists throughout history and it will soon vomit, with Allah's help, the [present] occupiers."

"Oh those who pray, you have brothers wrongly and aggressively jailed in America. They have been forgotten. They were charged with false claims about the bombing of the World Trade [Center] in New York. We, from the Al-Aqsa Mosque and on your behalf, demand the release of these prisoners, who are monotheistic Muslims."

[1] See MEMRI .<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/389.htm>, November 9, 2000, for Sabri on the Intifada and child-martyrs.

[2] See Inquiry & Analysis No. 53, May 2, 2001,  
Debating the Religious, Political and Moral Legitimacy of Suicide Bombings Part 1:  
The Debate over Religious Legitimacy.



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The Middle East Media Research Institute  
P.O. Box 27837, Washington, DC 20038-7837  
Phone: [202] 955-9070 Fax: [202] 955-9077 E-Mail: [memri@memri.org](mailto:memri@memri.org)  
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